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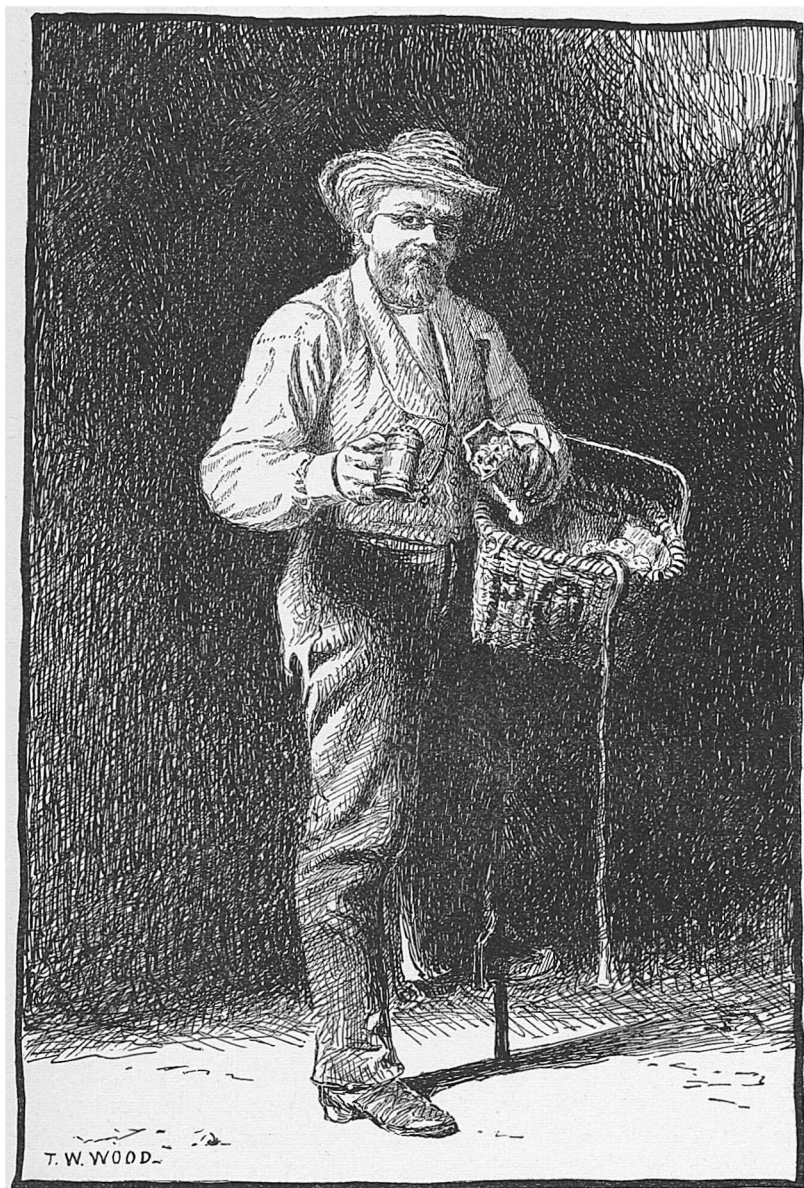
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## III.—AMERICAN WATER-COLOR SOCIETY, NEW YORK.

## THIRTEENTH ANNUAL EXHIBITION.

(OPENED FEBRUARY 2. CLOSED MARCH 1.)



POP-CORN.

BY T. W. WOOD.—FROM THE ARTIST'S OWN SKETCH.

THE WATER-COLOR SOCIETY accompanies its Exhibition with perhaps the most elegant catalogue ever prepared for a similar occasion. It is on luxurious paper, profusely illustrated, and has title-page and cover in mediæval red and black. A carelessness of proof-reading and of printing the "process" plates is to be regretted; but it is a work of art in itself, and still more gratifying as an evidence of a really formidable ambition and energy on the part of the Society. One may incline at first to find the overture a little too important for the body of the piece. The pictures are small, and of a rather minor character in subject, and the dashing lines of the sketch hold out a prospect which in many instances is illusive. On the other hand, there are very many more to which the reproductions do no sort of justice. One is impressed on examination with the quality of things. If there are few works that at once seize and dazzle the attention, there are many of sterling worth that permanently hold it. It is an Exhibition that grows in favor; and, though it does not surpass the best of former years, it holds its own very well with them. Some of the stronger names well known in this branch are absent, and others represented by rather slight examples. No inference of a decline of interest need be based upon this, however, since it is likely to be simply a matter of temporary engrossment, while, on the

contrary, most distinct indications of progress and ground for congratulation are to be found in the advent of new men, and in the greater skill and enthusiasm in the field shown by others who had already begun to commend themselves to favor.

The kind of spirit had in mind is found in such a leading example as that of Alfred Kappes, one of the comparatively new comers, who promises to be of the first force. His fondness is particularly for character, which he is apt to accent to the point of caricature. He takes us into a very common kind of society, it is true, but this



COGITATIVE.

BY WALTER SHIRLAW.—FROM THE ARTIST'S OWN SKETCH.

be used with the perfection of Simoni, who bestows it with a caressing delicacy upon the complexion of a nice but somewhat too fashion-plate sort of figure in a pink ball-dress, it might be less open to cavil; but at the best the over-elaboration results in tameness, and at the worst in a granulated texture not unlike that of fish-roe. It is a drawback in Edwin Bale's otherwise bright and charming *Spring-time*, a pretty child with a basket of primroses, where it is sparingly used, and a more serious one in his other works in proportion to its greater prevalence. He is an artist of a considerable inequality of taste. The entirely conventional *Woman of Amalfi*, of the old school, and the Birket-Foster-like grandfather and child luring a canary out of its cage, would hardly be thought by the same hand as the *Spring-time* mentioned, and another *Spring-time*, in which peasant children are presenting some wild-flowers to an Italian *padre*, who has come down from the convent, with its row of cypress-trees, on the hill-top.

Newell uses a bolder stipple, strokes instead of dots, more artistic and seen to advantage in his good checker-player, *My Move*, still woolly and heavy as compared with the wash. Symington's two urchins in a punt, on a lake in the gray of an early morning, are the best of his series, the rest of which lag considerably behind. Bricher and Bellows are strangely tame and commonplace in their pronounced figure pieces, for men who do so well when dealing with out-of-doors nature. Low has a nice, decorative, classic maiden in a maze of apple-blossoms, which recalls in sentiment the vanished Pre-Raphaelites. Beckwith's *Scherzo*, a springing, allegorical shape, on a vivid blue ground, good in motion but flashy in color, and with a smile rather leering than enticing, is better in its black and white reproduction. Walter Satterlee shows no progress this year more than others towards the crispness of which he is so much in need, nor does he gather any intimation that every picture is not the more taking for having all the primary colors bestowed in the middle of it. To the average observer a too persistent placing of a red and a blue lover in a yellow landscape, and giving of a yellow-robed baby to be tossed in air by a blue-shirted parent, while a crimson-lake sister looks on in delight, is an indication of poverty of resource rather than of feeling for glow and richness.

would be of little consequence had he not the habit of presenting it with a decided harshness and frigidity of execution. Here, however, though in his *Old, Old*, and his strongly realistic market scene, he does not shake off his ruling proclivity, in two small figures—one of a boy cutting a water-melon, the other of a man cutting up cabbages for vegetable soup—he shows himself a colorist. He permits himself to soften the lines of the drawing, and blend his hues together to agreeable purpose. He uses a straightforward water-color method, of small washes, and but the faintest touches of white, for the flesh as for all the rest. It is one of the few instances where a solid roundness is made to consist with this kind of agreeable texture, to which a certain flatness is generally thought to be necessary. The *Priscilla*, and guitar-player, *Old Songs*, of Jacobs, and the *Katrina Van Tassel* of Earle, coquettish figures of peculiarly intelligent and speaking expression of countenance, are washed in with even more transparent touches throughout. It is important to note and commend this, since the contrary practice of "stippling" the flesh with painful small dots is so much more common. Could the stipple

Wood's *Pop-corn* is one of the more successful of those types from common life which he is fond of treating. He endeavors to convey the intimate character and individuality by dwelling upon the appropriate expression, carriage, gesture, all the details of condition and dress, — the ancient spectacles, the coarse-braided straw hat, the cheap cane, crooked at the handle, the tin caster with which a dash of salt is given to the wares for a final flavor as he parts with one more paper bag, — with an affectionate interest. In this field a too great solicitude to avoid ambiguity is apt to result in fixing the ephemeral expression as if it were graven in. Happy is he who can detain it, and yet let it play lightly, as if it were to be the next moment again on its passage! Shirlaw's *Bavarian Beggars*, and maudlin cavalier, *Cogitative*, are slight, but in his best manner.

The strictly local exhibitors are not prolific in figures. Where, one asks, are the talented illustrators, whose ultimate achievements should be found in the important displays of the year? Is it that they are over-crowded by the demands of their daily routine, or do they work better upon a definite suggestion and impulse from without, than of their own motion? So good a training school as that in which they are engaged ought to produce in time a class of works of a very dignified order. Among the few who are present, Robert Blum is especially noticeable in his *Fish-Stall in Japan*, and *Connoisseur*, both of the well-known Fortuny type. The department of figures is reinforced, however, by strong examples from Earle, of Chicago, and especially from the American delegation resident abroad, or very lately returned home. Knight's Italian peasant lovers at a well, Robinson's large, naïve French peasant child, pulling apart a daisy, Earle's hale, good-humored sportsman, Davis's Italian shepherdess, Mary L. Stone's farm-house court, Miss Cassatt's study of a lady in white, on a sage-green ground, leave little of the capabilities of the art to be demonstrated by the real foreigners, — the Indunis, Tezzos, Dettis, Tofanos, Worms, and Bales, — chiefly Italians this year, of whom the usual number, loaned by the dealers, their owners, are scattered through the galleries. A Neuhuys is a Dutch interior, with a nice effect of light on solid, serious figures, in the manner of Israels. Two pleasing low-toned Mauves, sheep in a wood, and a girl minding a cow, should be a useful example, to those who require it, of how little positive color is needed — a touch of blue on a bit of scarf, or so, in the midst of the pale greens, is about all there is — for a sufficient effect.

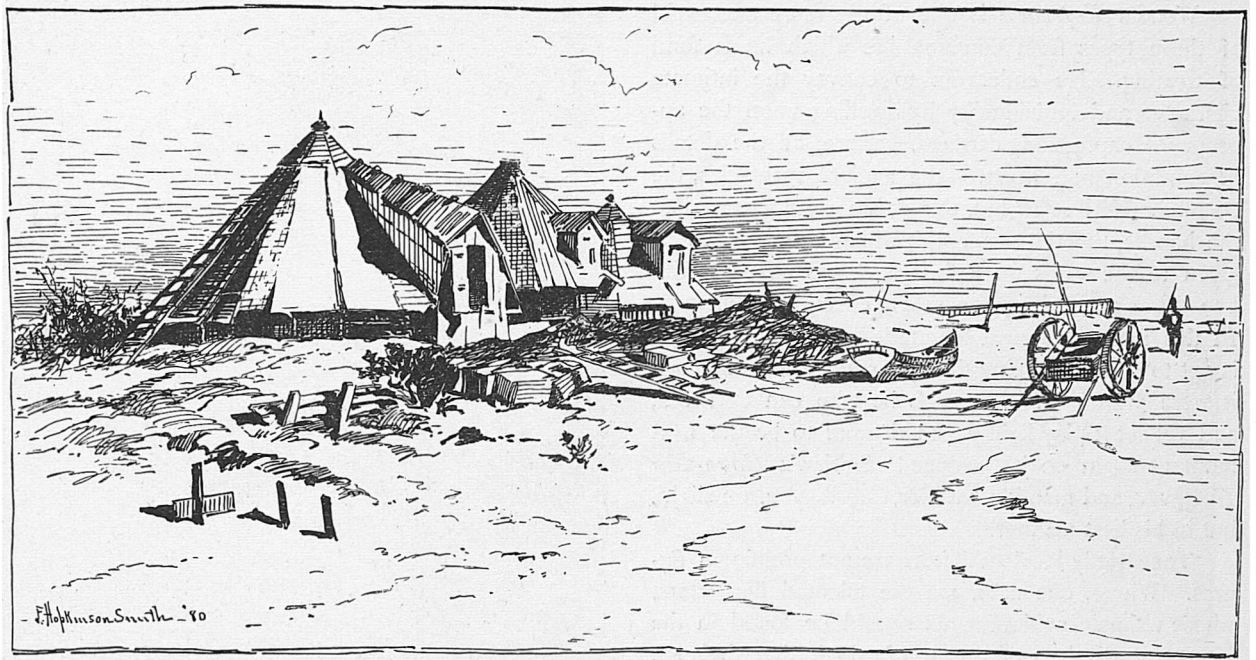
The peculiar strength of the Exhibition is in a department of bold forms connected with life, old boats on the shore and canal, shanties, and larger habitations, brought into the first plane, and treated for themselves, instead of as accessories. F. Hopkinson Smith, Quartley, George H. Smillie, Muhrman, Bunker, Reinhart, Shurtleff, and McCutcheon are particularly happy here, and the best specimens are of an extraordinary brightness and raciness. No theme in this class affords a better opening for strong and simple effect, and composition of lines, than one of the small plank landing-stages of water-side stations where there is little traffic, utilized by F. Hopkinson Smith and George H. Smillie, and again by Henry Farrer in etching. Running out from the shore, it reverses the lines of the stream at an agreeable angle, and, in full light above, contrasts the dark markings of the supporting piles and the definite blot of shadow cast on the water below. F. Hopkinson Smith leads in the number of his contributions, and seems to find here his legitimate field. In all he shows a great advance over his somewhat stereotyped work in black and white, and inspires very lively hopes of his future. In some cases he is fortunate in his subjects, as in the group of odd structures on the beach at Seabright, which it would be hard to surpass for pure picturesqueness anywhere; but he is more fortunate in his own intuition, which is capable of selecting them without regard to precedents. In an old gray barn in the woods, with a partly melted snow-fall on the ground, and the common Seventh Avenue tenements, with the *débris* of a teeming poverty which can keep nothing hidden about them, he is even better.



THE CONNOISSEUR.

BY ROBERT BLUM. — FROM THE ARTIST'S OWN SKETCH.





FISHERMEN'S ICEHOUSES AT SEABRIGHT.

BY F. HOPKINSON SMITH. — FROM THE ARTIST'S OWN SKETCH.

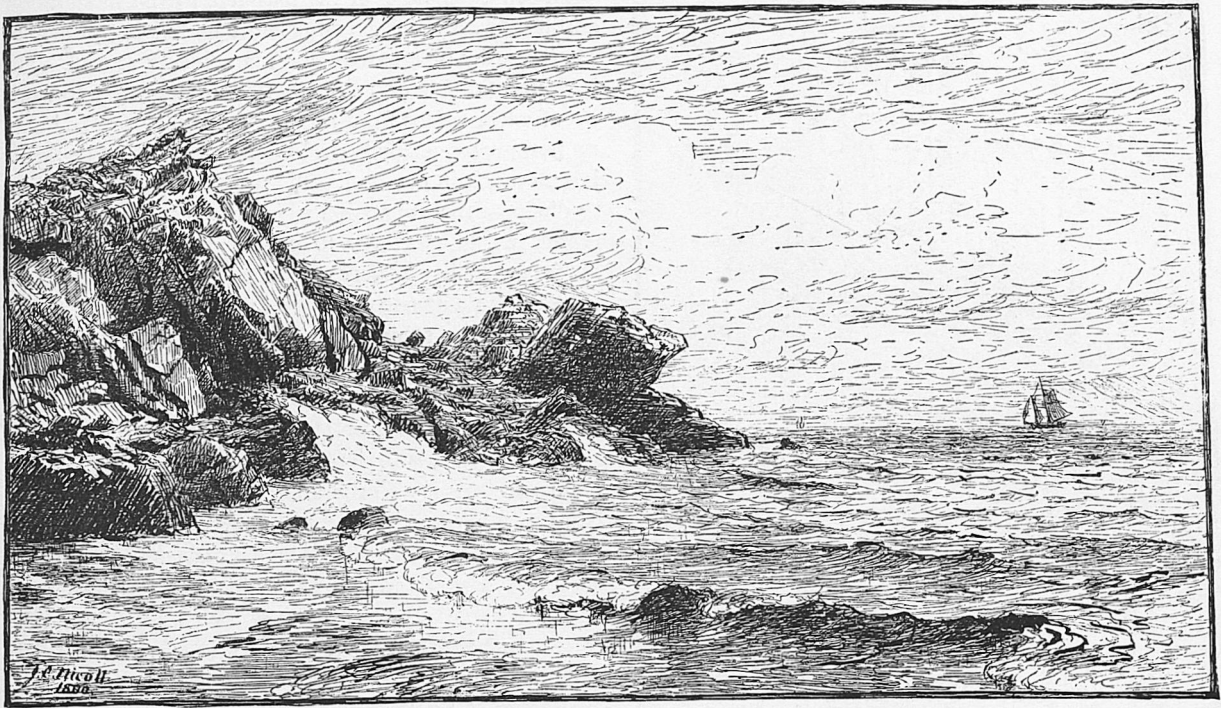
Body color and toned paper as a ground are much in use by this school, and it may be that the brilliant success of so many prominent examples will give an encouragement to a kind of treatment which is to be deprecated. It would be well if would-be imitators could be got to note that the charm of them lies in qualities which no kind of material could quite destroy, and that it is got in spite of, rather than through the aid of, the material. They are not without transparency, too, for the skilled hand will secure it in some way in the heaviest material, while the tyro will be muddy in the most limpid; but one goes away with a mental reservation. Talk of "legitimacy" and "illegitimacy" is of little account, but it is certain that one feels a chalkiness and artificiality where there should be fluidity and real light and distance. The landscape men, Kruseman Van Elten, Schell; Selinger, J. Alden Wier, Van Laer, Charles Parsons, get their wet, transparent effects — and even those who desire a certain ruggedness, like R. Swain Gifford in his *Border of the Sea*, or *Brittany Farm*, and a very great deal, like Gibson in his very strong autumn woods (all rough boulders, bark of trees, and fallen leaves, with but a patch of open sky), theirs — with pure blots; and the school in question is at its best when it nearest approaches them.

Muhrman, in an extensive range of work, is a pronounced exponent of the very thinnest method, and is well worthy of study for his showing of what it can do. Influenced by Currier, he much surpasses anything that has



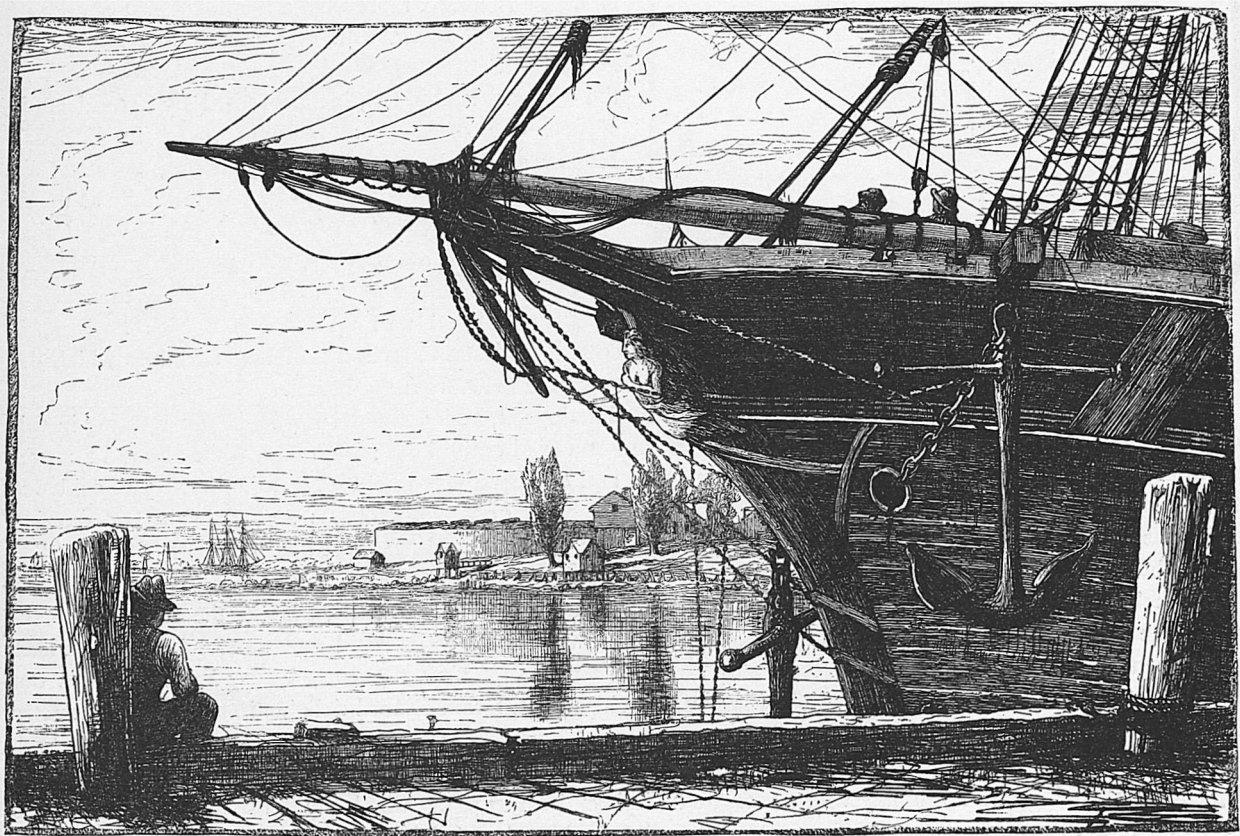
A BRITTANY FARM.

BY R. SWAIN GIFFORD. — FROM THE ARTIST'S OWN SKETCH.



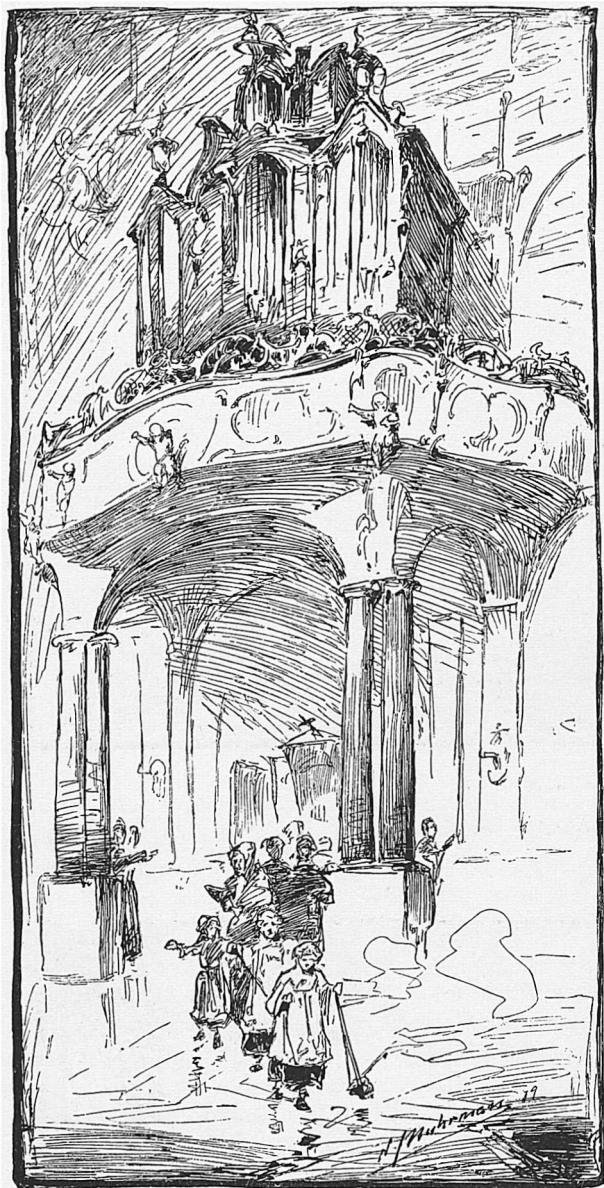
CLIFFS AT PULPIT ROCK, NAHANT.

BY J. C. NICOLL. — FROM THE ARTIST'S OWN SKETCH.



ON BUTTERMILK CHANNEL.

FROM THE ORIGINAL ETCHING BY HENRY FARRER.



GRAND CHOIR IN THE CHURCH AT ETTAL.

By H. MUHRMAN. — FROM THE ARTIST'S OWN SKETCH.

The chromo pattern of picture, chiefly landscape, fixed, balanced, and colored by rule, is not wanting in this collection, more than other features calculated to arouse but a mild enthusiasm; but these, while allowed a representation with which they can find no fault, are in a small and comparatively unobtrusive minority. The evidence of discrimination, of a shrewd sort of worldly wisdom, in reconciling conflicting claims and giving a fair showing to all sorts of tendencies, gathered from following around the works on and near that belt of honor, "the line," is still another augury of continued usefulness and increased prosperity to the Society.

A black and white room competes with the regular Black and White Exhibition only in the matter of etchings. The rate of development in this comparatively new branch is seen to be rapid and most gratifying. There are a dozen men who etch very well indeed, and three or four who are almost great. Henry Farrer reaches out towards Whistler and Haden, with his bold wharves and ships. R. Swain Gifford delights in a delicate symmetry of line. Parrish inclines to solidity and an easy naturalness; Thomas Moran, to a soft massiveness and mystery, with the woods and waters of his favorite Yellowstone. Church carries to the farthest point yet his curious conceits of goblins, mermaids, and a mummy with a rose, and displays them in plates which are full of soft, graduated, and broken tints, and of a delicious execution, yet rather painted with printer's ink than distinctly etched.

yet been seen here of his master's, by the moderation and taste with which he applies the underlying principle. He is worthy of attention for his subjects as well. He is one of the few who do not find it necessary to work over forever scraps from their foreign travels. He hunts up nothing especially typical in the way of the Americanism so much in demand. His service is rather in aiding to dissipate the impression which too many of our artist friends would endeavor to convey, that a "subject" in art is something of very rare occurrence, only to be attained at an expense of long journeys and infinite pains. He shows that subjects are so frequent in every-day life that, instead of having to go in search of them, it is impossible to avoid them. He finds inspiration in a cabbage-field; a turkey on an overturned barrel; the interior of a poor kitchen, with its rusty stove; a tall, unfinished brick warehouse, with the cranes of the builders on top. Nor are the pictures of these coarse objects unrefined themselves; they are treated with a grace and suggestiveness that give them a real distinction. At the same time, his large simple sketch in the old church near Oberammergau shows that he is not less susceptible than before to themes of greater intrinsic interest.

Henry P. Smith manages to give his body-color an unusual warmth and creaminess in an admirable marine, which renders the very texture of the thick water of the British coasts lashed into suds. His landscape near Penzance is as good, and of an almost unique simplicity. It is hardly more than a map of a vast stretch of sienna-colored moor, with every small tree and bit of hedge on it accurately set down, and a gleaming tarn in the centre. Nicoll, too, is represented by several landscapes, one of them an autumn scene in Peekskill Hollow at evening, low-toned, mysterious, and carefully wrought out, which is likely to be enjoyed fully as much as his marine *Cliffs at Pulpit Rock, Nahant*. Other marines of note are Lewis's, with peculiarly crystalline waves, near Narragansett, and Maynard's, in which a small boat, lifted well up towards a high horizon, is coming head on towards a tumbling surf, into which the spectator looks from the beach.

W. H. BISHOP.